The EQUAL Times

The Newsletter of Equality Colorado
PO Box 300476, Denver, CO 80203
(303) 839-5540

Summer/Fall, 1994
Vol. 2, No. 2

TOP SECRET CONFAB: GAY-RIGHTS OPPONENTS HOLD SUMMIT IN ROCKIES

by Kathy Deitsch

Bloated with success and defended by a "gated" stone castle named Glen Eyrie in Colorado Springs, Colorado For Family Values (CFV), convened another national conference to flaunt their know-how, "special rights" message and Amendment Two success to supporters from 17 states, including D.C.. "This is the most important meeting being held in the country," claimed Will Perkins, spokesman for CFV. Believing morality is the mainstay and that fundamental conservatives need to take political power by swarming the Republican party, attendees affirmed their commitment and strategized the next step. It's what Focus on the Family head James Dobson calls "rolling back the gay agenda."

Fifty-five right-wing activists and organizers attended the invitation only sessions that were closed to the media. Nearly a dozen were from Colorado. Several states were represented that have recently waged hard-fought initiative battles, Oregon, Springfield Missouri and Cincinnati. Others attended from states and communities targeted for anti-gay campaigns in "94, Michigan, Missouri, Florida, and Washington, as well as those committed to legislative/media attacks from New Mexico, Mississippi, NYC and North Carolina. According to Perkins, attendance had increased four-fold since the first meeting in 1993.

"Primary strategies identified during the meetings reportedly centered around several ideas aimed at exposing the 'evil' of the gay agenda."

Primary strategies identified during the meetings reportedly centered around several ideas aimed at exposing the "evil" of the gay agenda. Discussions established the need for a computer network with a central clearing house to store and pass-on information about gays, an activist data bank, monitoring crimes committed by gays and tracking corporations, who they fund and where they spend advertising dollars and watching office holders. In other words, an intelligence gathering operation.

In a mass media promotion campaign, the group said they hoped to discredit Kinsey's research/data on child abuse and put an end to tax dollar funding of sexuality programs. The media blitz would include "a base of letter writers and callers who can respond on a regular basis to editorial and news stories," in papers and on radio talk and call-in shows.

In an effort to extol heterosexual marriage, the

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Introducing..... Equality Colorado Joins with Colorado Human Rights Action Council

Equality Colorado, our organization of people dedicated to education, outreach and mobilization around lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered equal rights issues has now become part of a family, a family of three.

Paraphrasing Robert Kennedy that the power of one can change the course of a country, Equality Colorado and Colorado Human Rights Action Council (ECHRAC) are joining forces, The unity and solidarity from this marriage of two organizations both dedicated to equal rights for all Colorado citizens is creating a powerful presence of one entity which cannot be ignored in the political or local reality of Colorado.

Like partners in a marriage, the two entities are united in a common objective, but have their own distinct presence and character. Equality Colorado, a 501 C3 organization , will continue to provide educational programs, organizing with people of faith and outreach assistance around issues of lesbian, gay and bisexual equal rights throughout the state. Donations to this organization are fully tax-deductible.

Colorado Human Rights Action Council, which originally formed in Spring, 1993 is transforming in the new relationship with Equality Colorado into the Equality Colorado Human Rights Action Council (ECHRAC), a 501 C4 organization. ECHRAC will be an active lobbying entity which will present information to committees in the legislature, introduce, support and oppose legislation, and mobilize a constituent lobbying base across the state. Donations to ECHRAC are not tax-deductible but will support non-discrimination policymaking at the legislative level.

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Anti-Gay Ballot Initiatives: An Update

The strategy of the far right to pass ballot initiatives denying the rights of lesbian, gay men and bisexuals seems to be shifting. In 1994, only two of the states targeted for initiatives such as Colorado's Amendment 2 will actually see them on the ballot. Voters in Idaho, for the first time and Oregon, after several rounds will be voting on anti-gay initiatives in November.

Far right organizers in states such as Arizona, Michigan, Missouri, Florida, Nevada, and Washington failed in their bids to place these initiatives because of legal challenges or their failure to obtain enough signatures to qualify. It seems clear that these failures are signalling to the far right that the ballot initiative strategy is not working. Add to these failures the recent ruling in federal court that Cincinnati's anti-gay initiative is unconstitutional and Colorado's ruling by Judge Jeffrey Bayless that Amendment 2 is unconstitutional and it seems clear that this is a doomed strategy.

So what's next for far right organizing? Only they can tell us for sure, but here are some thoughts based on their comments and literature.

Undoubtedly far right organizers will continue to use their somewhat successful strategies of providing a great deal of misinformation about lesbians, gay men and bisexuals. They will continue to attempt to block proactive efforts to secure equal rights by our movements using their battle cry of "special rights".

Most noticeably though, it seems that they are shifting even more of their resources into the arena of electoral politics. Ensuring that gay friendly politicians or those that support a woman's right to choose will not get

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Top Secret Confab

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conference legislative agenda reportedly would offer traditional families tax rewards and recognize through legislation the traditional mom and dad family, thereby asserting its superiority. "Project Spotlight," an Ohio based program aims to take over local and state bodies so as to introduce new laws that ban gay rights. Legally, the attendees say they plan to assemble an advisory board of politicians, lawyers and media experts to identify a test case to argue before the U.S. Supreme Court and establish a legal network to provide support services for those being sued by homosexuals.

A Focus on the Family spokesperson attendee said Dr. James Dobson believes gay rights is one of the most significant issues of our times and suggested that division in the church on this issue hurts the cause. Robert Skolrood, president of the National Legal Foundation, a group active in both Colorado and Cincinnati criticized evangelical ministers as knowing too little, being soft in their feelings and afraid to take leadership in this "spiritual battle" to stop gay rights.

As many renegades on the right circle the wagon of "our lesbian and gay lives," their growing influence bears watching. In their eyes we are villainous. Gary Bauer, of the Family Research Council warns, this is a civil war. Our foes aim to set a moral agenda for the country. They're learning the mechanics of how to, they're constantly identifying a disciplined block of voters, they're ensuring that a democratic process works for them to change the direction of America. They're developing political power.

Thanks to Skip Porteous of the Freedom Writer and Institute for First Amendment Studies and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force for providing the research information for this article.

Kathy Deitsch is a Colorado based freelance writer.

Equality and ECHRAC

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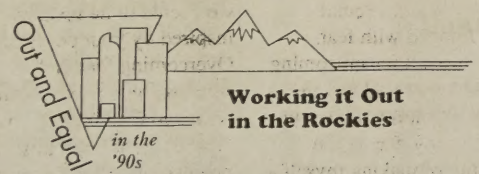
The newest member of this extended family is the Equality Political Action Committee. Equality PAC, a non-partisan political committee is committed to providing resources to candidates who are allies supporting gay, lesbian and bisexual equal rights and the fight against AIDS. Equality PAC will survey candidates and make endorsements based on each candidate's response. Donations to Equality PAC are not tax-deductible.

So, there you have your new family. In the unity of the one common objective, equal rights for all, there is a growing, great and powerful presence.



Working it Out in the Rockies

Fourth Annual
Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual
Workplace Issues Conference

Denver, Colorado
Saturday and Sunday
Oct. 15-16, 1994

Monday, Oct. 17 Post-conference Human Resources Institute day

for registration information:
Out and Equal
P.O. Box 300476
Denver, CO 80203

(303) 538-4318

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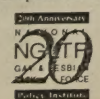

Events for Equality

A Dinner of Faith

Join the Lambda Alliance and the Lesbian, Bisexual and Gay Alliance of the *University of Denver* at their annual dinner on *Tuesday, October 11, 1994.* The dinner will benefit Equality Colorado. The Rev. Jane Vennard will be the keynote speaker. Call Patrick at 871-3222 for ticket information.

One Person's Junk...

Equality Colorado will be having a garage sale on Saturday, September 24 in Lakewood at the home of one of our board members. If you have any items you want to donate to the sale, please call us at the office, 839-5540.

Immerse Yourself In "Rain"

Treat yourself to a benefit performance of "Rain," produced by the Washington Park Players on ***Friday, October 7.*** The play is based on Somerset Maugham's short story about intolerance perpetuated by religious beliefs. Tickets are $10.00 and the play will be shown at Grant Avenue Church, 216 South Grant in Denver. Call 839-5540 and ask about "Rain."

A Place at the Table

On Saturday, October 15, in conjunction with the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's conference on gay, lesbian and bisexual workplace issues, there will be an evening extravaganza as a joint benefit for Equality Colorado and NGLTF. Please join us as we paint the town... LAVENDER! You will not want to miss this evening of hors d'oeuvres, libations and entertainment as we honor our own. Reserve your tickets now! $75.00 per person. Call for information at 839-5540.

Volunteer to Volunteer

Sharpen your research savvy. Learn new computer skills. Become attuned to bulk mailing requirements. Enjoy your work on a fundraising committee. These are just a few of the benefits of volunteering with Equality Colorado. We are always on the lookout for increasing our team of volunteers. If graphic design, office help, data entry, mailing, organizing in your neighborhood seem to be the right match, or if you want to investigate another opportunity, call Chris at 839-5540.

The Equal Times is the quarterly newsletter of Equality Colorado. Equality Colorado is a non-profit statewide, grassroots lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered equal rights advocacy organization. Our mission is to work to secure equality and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people. We seek to create an environment where people are respected, open dialogue is encouraged and the truth is spoken about the diversity of our family and sexual identities. We work for social change and an understanding of the interrelationship between communities.

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Voices of Faith
How Loud Is Your Voice?

by Patte Henderson

"Deep within us all there is an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Center, a speaking Voice, to which we may continually return," wrote Thomas Kelly, a Quaker educator and thinker. Kelly explores the meaning of our identity as humans trying to connect with the source of our lives and faith. As a confessing and practicing Christian, I am able to relate to the lifelong struggle of *listening* to this voice within me. I have discerned that this is God's voice and that to realize my full relationship with God, I must listen carefully and respond fully to that Voice.

"As God has not kept silent from humans since our creation, we too must not keep silent when we encounter our faith communities to be cold, unwelcoming places."

I must make sure that my response is loud in its faithfulness. I respond to God's Inner Voice through using my Outer Voice. It isn't possible to keep an internal silence when it comes to being in relationship with God. My Outer Voice calls me to action. The danger of the unexamined and careless Outer Voice is becoming a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal, and we are familiar with that through the clamor of those whose religious beliefs move them toward discrimination against a particular group of people.

As God yearns for all people to respond to abundant love, so God also yearns for all persons to respond to each other with that same love. As God has not kept silent from humans since our creation, we too must not keep silent when we encounter our faith communities to be cold, unwelcoming places. Our Outer Voices must become and remain megaphones from the inner voice we hear from God. God welcomes us and fills us with warmth, compassion and cleansing and in turn expects us to be equally as welcoming, warm and compassionate with each other.

This may seem to be a hazy, even unattainable ideal. We call ourselves children of God, believers, co-creating partners who struggle in our understanding of God. It is my hope that we may come together responding in loud and clear outer voices that welcome diversity in our communities. Just as God has welcomed us, so too must we welcome others.

Voices of Faith for Human Rights is the religious outreach program of Equality Colorado. We can provide speakers, worship leaders and consulting for your faith communities to enhance your outer voices and practice the welcoming that characterizes faith in action. Call us at 839-5540 for more information.

Patte Henderson is Director of Christian Education for Central Presbyterian Church, Denver, and is active in several local and national committees of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A).

Reflections on Courage

by Priscilla Inkpen

Courage is what we need in order to take on the enormous task of opening faith communities and society to new understanding. Everywhere we look, in the gay, lesbian and bisexual community and in the larger society, there is so much fear around this issue, it's almost palpable. When people are afraid, they don't see well, they don't learn well, they often don't make good decisions. It is courage that allows us to break through our fear and do what needs to be done. How do we find this courage within ourselves? I want to suggest three ways.

First, we need to stay in touch with the experiences that have caused us to feel passionately about this issue. Usually people do not change their values after they've been formed in childhood and adolescence unless they have a significant emotional experience. I dare say that most everyone has had a significant emotional experience around homosexuality. For some of us, it was discovering our own sexual orientation. For others, it was coming to terms with a gay friend or family member. All of us here have had our conventional wisdom and values shaken and changed by these experiences. Through them, we recognized the loneliness of struggling with one's sexual identity in a hostile society and the cruelty and injustice done to gays, bisexuals and lesbians. Our hearts were touched by compassion and outrage. As we stay in touch with our experiences, our compassion and outrage will kindle our courage to speak out and act. Your courage in speaking out may be the beginning of a significant emotional experience for someone else and doing this with all the creativity and knowledge we can muster.

Second, we can find courage in community. We can't do this work alone. I want to say something about my own journey with the Amendment 2 lawsuit. I had been asked to consider being in the suit, then as the election approached, the reality began sinking in that Amendment 2 might really pass and I might actually have to go through with the lawsuit. I found myself flooded with fear. Joining the suit meant coming out completely—taking on the possibility that my job could be in jeopardy, facing the possibility of making myself a target for "crazies." One day it all came to a head when I was meeting with a small community that is part of the campus ministry. As I talked with them, the fear just poured out in tears. That group surrounded me with such care that I was able to let go of the fear that had been gripping me. That was the point at which I was able to let go of the fear. Having that community which encouraged me and promised to keep supporting me was critical.

I tell this story about my own struggle with fear not because I am in any way special but because we all have decisions to make about how much we are going to speak out and be involved in this issue. Every one of us takes some kind of risk when we decide to be involved. I am inspired by your courage. Overcoming fear and summoning courage is not a once and for all thing—we have to go through this process again and again.

Priscilla Inkpen is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ and served as campus minister with United Ministries in Higher Education at the University of Colorado, Boulder. She was one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit against Amendment 2. This excerpt is from a talk Inkpen gave to fifty people from a variety of faith traditions at the first meeting of Voices of Faith for Human Rights in November, 1993:

Out and About: Take Action Now

Olympics Out of Cobb County Georgia

Cobb County, Georgia passed a resolution last August that condemns the "gay lifestyle" as incompatible with the community's standards. A "compromise" resolution which weakened the extremism of the original did not pass this June, and the county commission refused to rescind the original. Therefore, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Olympics Out of Cobb County Coalition demanded that the Olympic volleyball events be moved out of Cobb County. Finally, the Olympic Games organizers decided to move the volleyball preliminaries to the University of Georgia in Athens and out of Cobb County!

Sweden Passes New Partnership Law

Sweden joined Norway, Greenland and Denmark in passing a partnership law on June 7th, 1994. Beginning in January of next year, gays and lesbians will be able to get married, officially known as "registered partnership". The outcome was uncertain to the end, but it did pass with a margin of 30 votes!

TAKE ACTION

Supporters of Gay Games Under Siege

Continental Airlines has received "hundreds of hostile letters" protesting the company's role as Official Airlines of Gay Games IV. Send letters of support to: Customer Relations, Continental Airlines, 9999 Richmond Ave., Houston, TX 77042.

Visa made a corporate donation of $10,000 to the Gay Games and provided credit card services for the games. Pat Robertson issued a call over TV for his believers to protest Visa's support. Visa is getting hundreds of calls from people threatening to cut up their credit cards and never use Visa again. More importantly, large depositors at banks in the midwest have threatened to withdraw their money from banks that issue Visa cards. Visa is getting heavy pressure, and we must try to counter that with our thanks and support. Please call Visa as soon as possible to recognize and support their recognition of the lesbian and gay community and the ideals of the Gay Games. Ask to speak to a supervisor so that your call gets recorded properly. Phone: 1-800-336-3386. or write to: VISA, P.O. BOX 8999, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94128-8999.

Tasmania, Australia

Tasmania was condemned by the UN Human Rights Commission for its anti-homosexual legislation. They were given several months to respond, but last month the deadline passed with no response. Gay and lesbian groups in Australia are launching a boycott against the state. On November 7-10 in Hobart, Tasmania a huge convention called the World Congress on Adventure Travel and Eco-Tourism is scheduled. The head of this group is in Englewood, Colorado. Please encourage the Congress to change its venue to another Australian city: Debra Dearien-Moye, Congress Director, Adventure Travel Society, Revere Parkway, Englewood, CO 80111, phone (303) 649-9016, fax (303) 649-9017.

Sound Familiar? - Idaho's Proposition 1

Gays, lesbians and bisexuals in Idaho face an anti-gay proposition that would bar all gay rights legislation and anti-discrimination laws or policies based on sexual orientation. Idaho's Proposition 1 is similar to Colorado's Amendment 2 in 1992 except that it would be a statute and not a constitutional provision. It also declares same-sex marriages or partnerships to be against public policy and it would force public school teachers and counselors to condemn homosexuality as unhealthy and unacceptable behavior. The proposition contains a severability clause, so that even if the courts find portions of the proposition to be unconstitutional, any remaining parts would be enacted.

The Idaho Attorney General has already issued two opinions stating that it is unconstitutional, but this has not deterred the Idaho Citizen's Alliance, the group that is sponsoring the proposition. Its founder and leader, Bill Proctor, a convicted cocaine dealer, continues to receive great support from Idaho's right-wing factions.

The purpose of Proposition 1 is "recognition that homosexuality shall not form the basis for the granting of minority status". The heart of the proposition states:

> "No agency, department or political subdivision of the State of Idaho shall enact or adopt any law, rule policy, or agreement which has the purpose or effect of granting minority status to persons who engage in homosexual behavior; therefore, affirmative action, quota preferences, and special classifications such as 'sexual orientation' or similar designations shall not be established on the basis of homosexuality."

Other sections address public schools, public funding, same-sex marriages and domestic partnerships. It seems that they learned something from Colorado and are trying to ensure that at least some part of it would become law. Another testing ground for anti-gay legislation?

To counter this spurious attack against lesbians, gays and bisexuals - a bipartisan group of religious organizations, business leaders and others have joined to form the No on 1 Coalition. They plan to educate Idaho voters of the discriminatory effect of the proposition. **The No on 1 Coalition needs to raise $500,000 for its campaign to defeat proposition 1 and requests contributions be made to: No on 1, PO Box 797, Boise Idaho 83701. They can be reached at (208)384-5970.**

Thanks to Individuals....

Most of us are impressed by grants from foundations and corporations, but the vision of Equality Colorado and the implementation of our daily operations depend upon the financial gifts of people like you. About 85% of our support comes from you. We appreciate that and owe our organizational health and possibilities to you, our supporters.

Do what you can, whether it is a few dollars left at month's end or a major gift. Whatever you can do, it will be greatly appreciated. There are many ways to give to Equality - here are a few:

- Cash gifts
- stock gifts
- in-kind contributions
- volunteer hours
- write us into your will
- matching corporate contributions
- write us in on the United Way form
- come to a fundraising event

...but we still need your support...

Equality's Wish List

- **office supplies (all kinds)**
- **copy paper (all colors)**
- **coffeemaker**
- **computer diskettes (3.5 inch)**
- **VCR**
- **tape recorder**
- **file cabinets**

Equality Colorado Human Rights Action Council

Legislative News

Workplace Anti-Discrimination Bill and Jesse Helms

by Jeff Hersh

In an effort to derail a comprehensive federal bill that would end discrimination based on sexual orientation in the workplace, Senator Jesse Helms has launched a gay-bashing war in Congress. The North Carolina Senator's efforts come against a backdrop of unprecedented bipartisan support for the non-discrimination measure, with 30 sponsors in the Senate and 112 sponsors in the House shortly after the bill was introduced. In addition, national polls show a 76% support for this bill.

In the past month Sen. Helms proposed anti-gay amendments to bills on education, agriculture and the arts to frustrate recent civil rights advances by the Clinton administration, and he made hateful speeches and threatened to propose nearly a dozen more anti-gay amendments to other bills.

These tactics are an attempt by Sen. Helms to divert gay groups and lobbyists from advancing the Employment Non-Discrimination Act of 1994, which would extend existing federal employment discrimination protections to lesbians, gay men and bisexuals. If enacted, this act would prevent lesbians, gays and bisexuals from being discriminated against in hiring, promotions and firing decisions at most businesses and government positions throughout the country. It would also provide a legal avenue for enforcement through the federal courts.

Sen. Helms' amendments would prevent public schools from providing gay-sensitive counseling or teaching tolerance of lesbian and gay students, would censure federally funded art, and would frustrate anti-discrimination policies of the Agriculture Department by halting seminars on recruitment and tolerance of gays and by making it more difficult to remove employees who speak out against or ignore the department's non-discriminatory policies.

In addition, Sen. Helms threatened to filibuster any attempt to remove his amendment from the education bill, and he threatened to propose an amendment to prohibit public schools from distributing condoms, and to propose other amendments to weaken the rights of gay veterans and other government employees.

Locally, the Equality Colorado Human Rights Action Council (ECHRAC) an organization that focuses on gay, lesbian and bisexual legislative issues, has called for Coloradoans to write or telephone their Representative and Senators to express support for the Employment Non-Discrimination Act and opposition to Sen. Helms' homophobic agenda. Your Representatives and Senators may be reached at (202) 224-3121. (Sen. bill S.2238; House bill H.R.4636).

What is ECHRAC?

ECHRAC has begun working and meeting with legislators to discuss common ground and to and gain support for our issues. The first lobby committee meeting will be held August 23rd where we will begin to strategize for the next legislative session. However, there are many things we need to get accomplished before the session begins.

For example, ECHRAC plans to introduce legislation on specific issues. We are working to draft some of this legislation and to prepare ourselves for any other bills which may arise. We are also looking for sponsors for our legislative efforts among the legislators.

Before the session begins we would like to have a constituent lobby system in place, so that we have some power to influence key votes when needed. **You** are an important part of making that effort work. Without you on the lobby list to be contacted for influencing key votes and making your opinion known, we will not be able to succeed in passing important legislation. It is one way in which you can be involved without ever leaving your home!

If you want to be a constituent lobbyist, be sure to contact Alicia Calderon at 839-5540. That way you will be contacted immediately when there is an important vote. We want **your** voice to be heard at the legislature.

Anti-Gay Ballot Initiatives: What's Next

(continued from page 1)

elected is certainly one part of that strategy, but ensuring that their own candidates **do** get elected is also central. The far right have been in the electoral political arena for decades, but never in such numbers and never in so focused a way. Their campaigns to ensure elected officials at all levels of government, particularly in school boards, city councils and state legislatures are frightening. The stealth candidate strategy was very effective initially, but many of their candidates no longer run in a stealth kind of way. They are very open about their positions on civil rights of all kinds, about their position on choice, about their positions on education and about who they are and what they believe. The populist sounding messages are often very appealing as we saw here in Colorado during the 1992 Amendment Two struggle.

So what does this mean? It means we must get involved at all levels of this movement. It means that we need to be involved, not only educating and organizing, but also researching candidates for office and exposing the real agenda of limiting people's rights and creating a theocracy in this country.

Upcoming Events

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17
DENVER
La Gente Unida Awards Banquet and Dance for the "Dieciseis de Septiembre". Regency Hotel, I-25 and 38th Ave. Dinner at 7:00 p.m. Dance at 9:00 p.m. Featured entertainment: Roberto Griego, a New Mexico band playing Mexican music and Brown Sugar. Tickets available at Equality Colorado, $15 for dinner and dance, and $7 for dance only. For more information, call 831-6086.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17
GRAND JUNCTION
American Voices hosting all day forum (9 am - 4 pm) *Public Schools, Public Choices* at the Robinson Performing Arts Theater, Mesa State College. Cost is $3.00 at the door for non-American Voices members; free for members. Box lunches available for $5.00. For more information, contact Jeff Basinger at (303) 241-0874.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17
COLORADO SPRINGS
Citizen's Project hosts Religion in the Classroom, a seminar on September 17th from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information, please contact Pat Tolle (719) 520-9899.

SEPTEMBER 22-24
GREELEY
The Names Project AIDS Memorial Quilt. Opening ceremony September 22, at 7:00 pm at Island Grove Park. Contact the AIDS Public Education League at (303) 223-6227.

SEPTEMBER 23
COLORADO SPRINGS
Citizen's Project is co-sponsoring with the Smokebrush Center, Imagination Celebration and Pike's Peak Library District *From Seuss to Shakespeare, Celebrating the Right to Read,* an exciting banned book week event. For more information, call the Smokebrush Center (719) 444-0884.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 4 OR 18
Protect Your Property: MOney and the Law, a seminar by Sally Jo Button, Mary Celeste and Dave Krause. $40 per person. Location to be announced. Call 861-5290 for information.

Gays in the News
FOCUS ON GLAAD/Denver

by John Wilkens

Some gay bashers use their fists. Some use a club. Others are more polite; they use a typewriter, microphone, or camera.

Homophobia. Anti-gay slurs. Bashings.

Why is it hazardous to be openly lesbian, bisexual, or gay in our society? What breeds the fear, contempt, and malice so many of us experience in our day to day activities?

American culture is just that — a culture, a medium for growth, a laboratory dish of attitudes, views, and beliefs. While much of what we learn comes from one-on-one information and experiences with people (which underscores the importance of coming out to family and friends), a majority comes from what we see, read, and hear in the mass media (newspapers, television, radio, movies, books).

What the media says about lesbians, bisexuals, and gays is what the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation of Denver (GLAAD/Denver) is all about. Our primary mission is to monitor national and Colorado media for bias, accuracy, inclusiveness, and outright defamatory statements.

While "the pursuit of truth" may be a noble goal, the media is a business and its bottom line is to serve and reflect the interests of its customers. Unless the LBG community raises its voice to let them know that we are their customers also, they will continue to serve up a mix of stereotypes, innuendo, and outright falsehoods about who we are individually and as a community.

GLAAD/Denver alerts the community to issues that require community response. Only when the media realize that their defamatory words and images cause harm to our community will they change their ways. It is up to all of us to confront media homophobia. Our letters and phone calls **do** make a difference.

Want to get media active? GLAAD/Denver is looking for individuals who are interested in monitoring and responding to local media coverage as well as getting the word out within our community. Volunteers are especially needed for our lesbian and people of color visibility projects. For more information, call (303) 331-2773.

MEDIA WATCH

Provided by
GLAAD/Denver

Post Possessed?

Our praise for the Denver Post's special insert of "Gay and in Love" (May 5/20) was premature. Seems that Post executive editor Neil Westergaard blew a gasket and tried to pull the collection of wire stories portraying lesbian parents, gay teens, and same-sex education issues in a human, unbiased light. Westergaard claims that reporting of LBGs is not "mundane" and treating us as just another slice of life amounts to "advocacy" reporting. In Westergaard's view the very existence of lesbians and gays is "controversial" and, if we are to be portrayed from a human interest angle, the opinions of bigots "for balance" must accompany our stories.

Westergaard's basic supposition is faulty. He forgets that anything that challenges the dominant social order is "controversial." Forty years ago desegregation was "controversial," yet the black civil rights struggle not only won equal rights, but a level of respect and humanity from the press. Are today's black human interest stories "balanced" by the views of the KKK? Are Cinco de Mayo stories "balanced" with English-only opinions? Certainly not!

By labeling our community as "controversial," Westergaard denies us our humanity and perpetuates stereotypes that we are radical, threatening, dangerous people. Yet part of reporting "controversial" issues is allowing the reader an unadulterated look at the issue from the perspective of the human beings involved — exactly what the Post did in their special section. Without insight into the all-too-human hopes and aspirations of LBG people — the all to human "ordinariness" of our community — "controversial" is all the public will be fed.

Westergaard's professional objectivity has been corrupted by a political agenda — pigeonholing lesbians and gays as radical, threatening, "controversial" people. It's time to speak up and let him know that LBGs read the Post and our lives are not "controversial." Contact Neil Westergaard, Executive Editor, Denver Post, P.O. Box 1709, Denver, CO, 80202, (303) 820-1010.

Reality Bites for Homophobes

The Fort Collins Coloradoan was the only paper in Colorado that came anywhere close to comprehensive coverage of the Stonewall commemoration. The paper ran a three-day front-page series titled "25 Years After Stonewall" focusing on the gains and struggles facing Fort Collins LBGs. Lesbians were prominently featured ("Lesbian Couple Lives Family Life" and "Gay Teens Find Inner Strength") and the series touched base with gay parenting, (gay) family values, institutional homophobia, stereotypes, LBG teens, accepting parents, and the current LBG rights movement. Most importantly, LBGs were seen as real people with rich lives and deep family bonds.

Coming on the heels of a national meeting of Exodus (an ex-gay conversion ministry) held in the city, it was amazing that homophobes were only given 1/3 of the series to spout their hate. However, they hit the phone lines and soon deluged the Coloradoan with hundreds of calls opposing the series. According to an insider, almost all of them parroted the "stop promoting the gay agenda" line of the religious right.

In the struggle for equal rights (no matter which minority group is targeted) the voices for oppression will always scream louder. After all, it is their comfortable prejudices and stereotypes that are being assailed. Yet if the media capitulates, the gulf between fear and understanding widens. For the sake of our future, it's time to get vocal.

Call and write the Coloradoan, PO Box 1577, Fort Collins, CO, 80522, (303) 224-7731, FAX: (303) 224-7899 and let them know you appreciate their honest and open look into our lives and community. Also, write the Denver Post, P.O. Box 1709, Denver, CO, 80202, (303) 820-1010 Post and the Rocky Mountain News, P.O. Box 719, Denver, CO, 80204, (303) 892-5381 and ask why neither paper covered Stonewall with as local a focus as their junior competition.

Love & Money

As the Post moves to limit inclusion of LBG lives to "controversial" stories, it's nice to see the Rocky Mountain News include us in something the "family values" crowd prizes — family financial planning. The News profiled a lesbian couple in its "Working Money" financial advice feature (6/20).

Plugging a same-sex couple into the tried and true "work+family+retirement" equation "Working Money" typically features created an interesting stew of legal, financial, and social questions. Writer Greg Todd's profile of the couple's

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Media Watch

(continued from page 6)

relationship and goals captured the condition of a happy suburban couple who happen to be lesbian. Sally Button's financial advice boiled down to one message: Without laws recognizing the relationship, the couple will never achieve the same status as a heterosexual couple.

Adhering to "it's a choice" thinking, Todd unintentionally encapsulated the reality of our heterosexist society: "A life of make-believe, pretense and veiled truths just don't cut it for Denise Dierfeldt. She chose the alternative — life with another woman."

Thank Don Knox, Business Editor, RMN, P.O. Box 719, Denver, CO, 80204, (303) 892-5242, for including LBGs in this feature and urge them to carry more. Remember, inclusion of LBGs in "traditional" heterosexual activities (such as photo contests about the American family) can be a powerful antidote to negative stereotyping.

The "BS" in PBS

In his first news conference since becoming president of the Public Broadcasting System (PBS), Ervin Duggan insisted that gay novelist Armistead Maupin "should be sending us letters of thanks" for broadcasting Tales of the City instead of criticizing Duggan's refusal to produce a sequel to the popular and critically-acclaimed series.

Shortly after Duggan took over, PBS reneged on a promise to produce the sequel to Tales. That broken promise has been widely attributed to pressure from homophobic, censorious organizations — which mounted hysterical, nation-wide protests over the airing of Tales of the City.

"We are the people who have written the word 'courage' across the (television) screen," Duggan said in response to a series of questions about PBS' swerve towards conservative programming. At the press conference, Duggan admitted that he has received at least 2,000 letters encouraging PBS to go forward with a sequel to Tales. However, Duggan dismissed those letters as a "coercion" effort orchestrated by Armistead Maupin.

Apparently, Duggan has nothing but disdain for the lesbian and gay public, a sizable segment of the audience for the Public Broadcasting System. He seems to abide by the anti-logic of 1984, in which those who advocate for free expression are cast as the 'coercive' censors, while those who demand censorship are given their way.

Broadcast your outrage to Ervin Duggan, President, PBS, 1320 Braddock Road, Alexandria, VA 22314-1698, tel. 703-739-5000 or 800-356-2626.

A Real World of Difference

The MTV network has embarked upon the third installment of its Real World series, a unique cinema verite program intercut with talking head commentary. A gay man is included amongst the latest cast of roommates, a group of "twentysomethings" selected to live together and have their lives captured on video tape.

Pedro is gay, a native Cuban, and HIV positive. After just a few episodes, he has offered an affirmative perspective on the lesbian/gay community. Among other difficulties, Pedro has had to deal with Republican roommate Rachel, who suffers from the usual cackle of conservative fears (for example, she questioned using the same bathroom as Pedro). Pedro is involved with another HIV positive man, Sean, who is African-American.

In the program's predecessors — The Real World and Real World II — MTV also included bisexual and lesbian individuals. Compliments for Real World III should be sent to Office of the President, MTV Networks Inc., 1515 Broadway, New York, NY 10036. American On Line (AOL) users can also post comments directly to the MTV message area.

The Essence of Good Journalism

The June 1994 issue of Essence magazine (which targets an African American readership) features "Homophobia: Will it Divide Us?" a column by Nadine Smith, Executive Director of the Florida Human Rights Task Force. Smith deftly examines the discouraging efforts by homophobic organizations that are "soliciting African Americans to align themselves with right-wing Whites against lesbians and gays of all colors." That effort is typified by the hateful video *Gay Rights, Special Rights,* which, as Smith notes, the Traditional Values Coalition "distributed tens of thousands of copies in Black communities, mostly through our churches."

"The irony of this alliance," Smith points out, "is that never before have right-wing organizations protested with African-Americans on issues of redlining, minority-business contracts, police brutality and economic redevelopment of the inner city." Smith also writes of the sources of inspiration "in the midst of such vile discrimination," such as the "unknown Black lesbians and gays who joined other people of color at New York City's Stonewall Inn in 1969 and refused to be hauled away by police.....

"I hope the day will come when Black lesbians and gays won't have to choose between fighting racism and homophobia," Smith advises her readers, "The real battle begins back home when the Far Right comes to your neighborhood and your church and calls on you to march against your family members or friends who are lesbian or gay."

Send praise to Essence, 1500 Broadway, New York, NY 10036, (212) 642-0600.

We need you!

☐ ***Yes!!*** I want to help the work of Equality Colorado to increase awareness and organize around issues affecting lesbians, gays and bisexuals. I know that my donation to Equality is tax deductible.
• *Checks should be made payable to* ***Equality Colorado***

☐ ***Yes!!*** I want to help the work of Equality Colorado Human Rights Action Council to promote, support and oppose legislation related to gay, lesbian and bisexual issues. I know that my donation to ECHRAC is *not* tax deductible.
• *Checks should be made payable to* ***ECHRAC.***

☐ I would like to volunteer my time. Please send me information about volunteer opportunities.

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PO Box 300476
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Notable Quotables

"We must never appear to be attempting to rob anyone of their rights - their constitutional rights. To the extent we can control our public image, we must never appear to be bigoted or mean-spirited."

John Eldredge
Focus on the Family

"Oppression, discrimination and bigotry won't get you to heaven - but it will win CU a football game"

Sign seen at Celebration of Diversity rally in Boulder

"Our pastors don't know anything and most of them are wimps."

Robert Skolrood
National Legal Foundation, A conservative legal advocacy group

"By the end of the decade, the whole earth will view the church in a different light. The church will no longer be mocked and despised, but either loved or feared."

Paul Cain, Evangelist

"All of us who show an affirming flame are the holders of real moral power in this culture, a power that is held by all who speak Truth, practice Love, and demonstrate Courage."

Urvashi Vaid, attorney and lesbian activist

"Our freedom was not won a century ago; it is not won today. But some small part of it is in our hands, and we are marching no longer by ones and twos but in legions of thousands."

Dr. Martin Luther King

"I believe the Lord wanted me in the Legislature. I just believe the Bible from cover to cover."

Darlene Cornfield
Kansas legislator, up for reelection in November

Equality Colorado
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